

The New Jersey Shore...

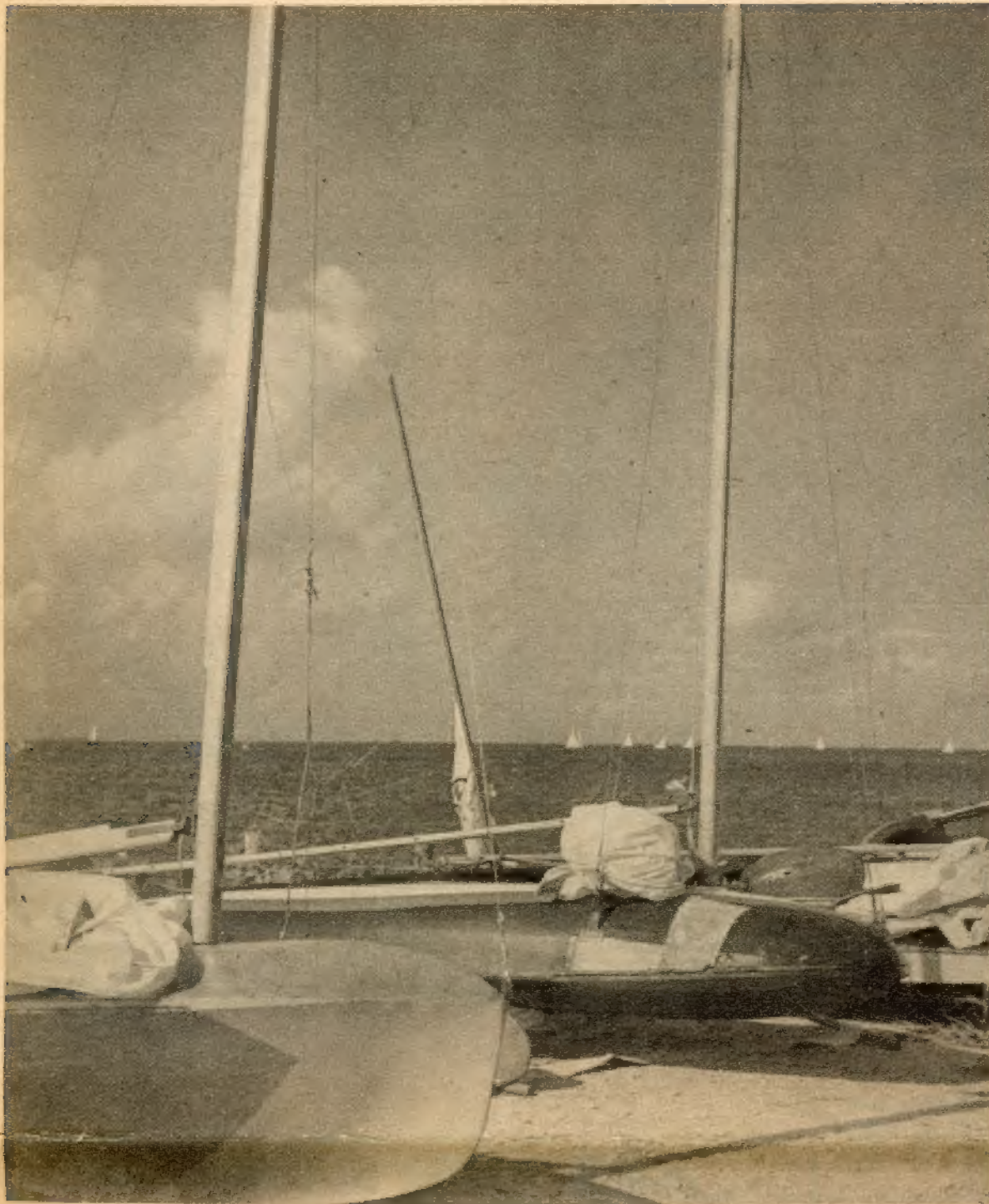


Photo by Walter F. Pullinger Jr.



ISLAND at SEA

New \$12 Million Causeway, Combined with Garden State Parkway, May Boom Seacoast Between Barnegat and Beach Haven Inlets

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

Sailboat racing off Beach Haven Crest, south of Manahawkin Bay. BELOW: Long Beach Island, narrow and 19 miles long, looking north from point above Beach Haven borough. Ocean is at right.



A LOVER of Long Beach Island is somewhat like the teen-age boy who has a new and beautiful girl friend—he is just bursting to introduce her to the world, but he has the vaguely uneasy feeling that to do so is the surest way to lose her.

Long Beach Island is not exactly unknown, nor is it nearly as naturally beautiful as it was a mere decade ago. Still, the narrow 19-mile-long island

This is the sixth of a series of articles on the New Jersey Shore. In the next installment, the writer will consider Atlantic City, famous as "The Playground of the World," and neighboring seashore resorts of Ventnor, Brigantine, Margate City and Longport.

maintains a reasonable facsimile of native charm to cause mixed feelings among its admirers about the new 12-million-dollar causeway linking island with mainland across Barnegat Bay.

The span will, on the positive side, eliminate the summer weekend traffic crushes on the low causeway which has more-or-less served Long Beach Island for some 40 years. It might also bring swarms of new customers to gladden the hearts of the shopkeepers and real estate men and to sadden the hearts of those regular



Fishing settlement on northern tip of island in shadow of "Old Barney." The red-and-white tower, also shown at right at mouth of Barnegat Inlet, is state park landmark and memorial to past.



visitors devoted to the skinny strip of sand.

Ah, well, no use crying over built bridges. Perhaps, in all truth, Long Beach Island too long has been too good a seaside thing to reserve for so relatively few.

LONG BEACH ISLAND begins an inlet away from the southern tip of Island Beach and runs straight south by southwest until it slopes off into Beach Haven Inlet. Vacationists readily accept the word of promoters that Long Beach is "Six Miles at Sea" (although it's really only four miles at the widest mainland-to-island separation).

Four miles is wide at that, wide enough to stir idle curiosity about why someone decided six miles sounded better. Four miles is also wide enough to make Long Beach Island quite free of pollen, something which a hay fever sufferer can deem worth noting.

This year the past and the future clasp hands across the island, since 1957-58 is set aside to observe the 100th birthday of Barnegat Light on the extreme northern tip of the island. That means a pause to venerate "Old Barney" and the bygone years, just when the new causeway forces attention on a changing future.

Between past and future stands the island of today. As of now there isn't a foot of boardwalk on the ocean front, not one brash amusement center overlooking the waves. Three or four blocks from the ocean, youth can have a bit of a fling on some scattered miniature golf courses or in occasional buildings housing a few "amusement" machines and juke boxes. There are three or four movie houses and a summer theater with talent "direct from Broadway," but sometimes the pace slows to the point that even teenagers play shuffleboard.

WHY under the sun would anyone ever cross a causeway, new or old, to go to Long Beach Island when Atlantic City is at most only an extra half hour away?

The answer likely is that the island

never has become complicated in a social or amusement sense. That tone hasn't altered materially despite the hundreds of new look-alike Cape Cod cottages built since World War II. Sure, Long Beach Island has some expensive homes, most of them nestling in the sand dunes north of Ship Bottom. By and large, though, the average Long Beacher is an ordinary, unexciting, moderate-income person, down with his family for a week or two in a rented cottage.

Barnegat Light is Long Beach Island's—and the New Jersey Shore's—most compelling symbol. The Sandy Hook Light is older by 94 years, but military rule keeps that beacon from being much more for most people than a white speck glimpsed off the Highlands at Navesink. Old Barney suffers no such handicap; its red and white tower can

be painted, photographed, touched, entered—and this year, at one's own risk, climbed to the very top.

The lighthouse lives on borrowed time, rescued from oblivion by sentiment (and a good many hundreds of thousands of dollars). Its light glowed for the last time in 1927, when Barnegat Lightship was placed eight miles at sea. These days the tower lives to remind new generations that once men who went down to the sea in ships often depended desperately on men who stayed behind to keep the lighthouses and launch the lifesaving boats.

AROUND Old Barney's base swirl the currents of rushing Barnegat Inlet, named in 1814 by Capt. Cornelius Jacobsen Mey, the ubiquitous Dutch sea captain who usually named everything in sight for himself. This time

he chose "Barendegat," meaning "Breakers Inlet—a name descriptive enough to last three and a half centuries with only slight Anglicizing.

New England whalers maneuvered their ships through the inlet around 1690, setting up lookouts at "Great Swamp" (near what is now Surf City). Later, other whale hunters erected two more lookouts on the island, one about three miles north of Great Swamp and the other about three miles south.

Whalers lingered on Long Beach Island long after they left the rest of the New Jersey coast. John F. Watson visited the island in 1833, and in his classic "Annals" wrote:

"I was surprised to learn from old Stephen Inman, one of the 12 islanders of Long Beach . . . that he and his family have never

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LONG BEACH ISLAND

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ceased to be whale catchers along this coast. They devote themselves to it in February and March. Generally (they) catch two or three a season . . ."

Already by Watson's day the litter of countless shipwrecks lay on the island's strand, mute evidence of the evil Barnegat shoals just offshore. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries scores and scores of ships of all sizes and all types ended their days on those shoals.

WHO knows for sure how many victims those shoals claimed—in ships and the men who sailed them? One source estimates the number at between 400 and 500. An official report to Congress in 1848 told of 158 vessels wrecked on the New Jersey coast in the 10 years between 1839 and 1848, most of those lost at Long Beach Island or Squan Beach directly to the north.

Occasionally ugly rumors drifted to the mainland of the "Barnegat pirates" who lured ships ashore by false lights. No one ever proved the charges; most recognized that the wild island got far more than its share of tragedy without need of trickery.

Of all the terrible sadnesses visited upon the island by the sea, none came near matching the wreck of the clipper ship *Powhatan*, grounded on the sand bar off Surf City on April 18, 1854. Heavy snow, driven before a howling gale, made lifesaving impossible before that sickening day came to its end every one of the *Powhatan's* 311 passengers and crew of 29 died in the pounding surf.

THOSE who whispered of "Barnegat pirates" did particularly grave injustice to the small band of islanders who worked as volunteer lifesavers for little or no reward. Fifteen years before the Atlantic claimed the *Powhatan*, Dr. William A. Newell stood on Long Beach Island, a helpless witness to the death of 13 sailors swept ashore from the doomed brig *Terasto*.

Dr. Newell knew that organized help could have saved the crewmen, but his chance to organize such help didn't come until 1848, when Monmouth County sent him to Congress. Quickly Congressman Newell introduced a bill to found the U.S. Lifesaving Service, the first government-financed life saving corps in the world and forerunner of today's Coast Guard stations.

At the same time others worked to warn ships off the shoals. Congress appropriated \$6,000 in 1834 for a 50-foot whitewashed brick lighthouse overlooking Barnegat Inlet. The surly ocean picked away at the beach below the lighthouse and in 1856 toppled the tower into the waves.

The government wasted little time replacing the light. Workmen under the direction of Lt. George Meade (later a hero as Gen. Meade at Gettysburg) began construction of a sturdy brick tower. The walls at the base were 10 feet thick, tapering to 18 inches thick at the top, 168 feet above sea level.



Piers and land-fill for the new \$12 million causeway parallel older auto "bridge" which connects Long Beach (background) with mainland at Manahawkin.

Airview by Dave Johnson

THIS is "Old Barney," the "Grand Old Champion of the Tides." Only the lighthouse at Pensacola, Fla., is taller—by a single foot. Through all storms the tower stood, swaying in hurricane gales but always casting its light 20 to 30 miles across the ocean. Attracted by the light, birds would crash against its glass and fall dead to the ground, enough of them at times to cover the sand below the tower.

An occasional vacationist made his way to Long Beach Island before 1800, but the pace picked up measurably in 1822. That year, for the first time, anyone who made the jolting trip across state from Philadelphia and then found someone to sail him across Barnegat Bay could be choosy—not one, but two places noised it about in 1822 that they would be willing to entertain boarders.

The choice was this: Joe Horner's old house, converted into a "first-class seaside hotel" by The Philadelphia Company, or the "Mansion of Health," a "large house 120 feet long . . . well kept, and supported by a goodly number of inmates" (paying guests, by any name).

Others established boarding houses here and there—John Brown and his four sons, hosts after 1855 at the Ashley House near Barnegat Light; James James ("Double Jimmy"), proprietor of the Club House near Harvey Cedars; Capt. Sammy Perrine, builder of the Harvey Cedars Hotel in the 1840s, and Capt. Thomas Bond, owner and proprietor of "The Long Beach House" on the south end of the island.

NO hotel keeper outdid Capt. Bond—"Old Man" Bond—in hospitality. The bearded old captain recognized that people willingly paid to be housed and fed with simplicity. Capt. Bond was in every sense a Long Beach pioneer; his activities included not only hotel keeping but also a brilliant career in the lifesaving service.

The captain put on no airs and permitted none. His guests hunted, fished, swam, enjoyed the billiard room and bowling alley or watched the owner's imprisoned golden eagle in the yard. "B'iled" shirts brought stares; the uniform at Bond's was an old straw hat, a red flannel shirt and overalls for males and a sunbonnet and calico gown for the ladies.

Much of the island's popularity came to depend on one factor—the distance from the mainland made its breezes relatively free of pollen, an important item for hay fever sufferers. Many came in the 1850s and 1860s seeking relief from August hay fever, and one of those stayed to found Beach Haven in 1872.

Archelaus R. Pharo of Tuckerton, whose wife for years on Long Beach Island knew surcease from sneezing in pollen time, decided in 1871 the time had come for a new resort town on the island. Pharo's decision rested in understandable measure on more than hay fever. That same year a railroad was completed between Philadelphia and Tuckerton and in 1872 Pharo induced the railroad to build a spur to the bay.

PHARO bought a steamer, plied it between spur and the lots he owned on the island. The name for the development came from Pharo's daughter, who suggested Beach Haven. The resort was christened with a minor if flattering dissent from one Dr. A. A. Willett, who said: "An 'e' should be inserted in Haven; this is Beach Heaven!" That could be called a medical testimonial.

Haven, the resort, caught the fancy of Philadelphians. Three Beach Haven hotels welcomed guests before 1876—the Parry House, the Hotel Baldwin and the Engleside. The latter two, modified through the years, still stand. The Parry House burned spectacularly in 1881, although none of its 200 guests perished.

The activity at Beach Haven

naturally affected other parts of the island. Resorts started—Surf City in 1873, Barnegat City (in the shade of Old Barney) in 1881, Peahala in 1882, North Beach Haven in 1887, Spray Beach in 1890 and Ship Bottom in 1898.

Spare a moment for Ship Bottom, now the entranceway to all of Long Beach Island. Back about 1817, the folk-lorists say, a ship floated ashore at the spot, bottom side up. Rescuers cut through the hull's planking and out stepped a young woman. She spoke a foreign tongue and soon disappeared, after apparently dazzling the rescuers so that they couldn't even remember the ship's name. They did remember a ship's bottom, however. So easily are towns named.

A GOOD deal of Long Beach Island's claim to allure dates back to the late days of the 19th Century. Then visitors leisurely watched fishermen dry their nets on the beaches, sometimes went to the fishermen's dances, watched the artists trying to transfer sand dunes to canvas, observed the sailing ships pass by on the horizon—and listened open-mouthed to tales of treasure and sagas of the sea.

They lived in the midst of one treasure yarn, the most famed on the island, in about 1885—the exact date is difficult to pin down.

Late one afternoon in about 1885, a sloop anchored in the ocean two miles below Beach Haven and in the gathering dusk two men sailed a yawl ashore. They refused lodging at the Life Saving Station and by dawn's early light the station lookout saw them digging rapidly in a hole they apparently had been working on all night. As the lookout watched the pair hoisted an iron-bound chest out of the hole.

The lookout summoned help, but by the time he and others reached the spot the pair had fled. Behind they left the rifled chest, an old cutlass, some time-stained Spanish coins—and



Lonely stretch of beach midway on island near Ship Bottom.

Photo by Walter F. Pullinger Jr.

a map, yellowed with age. It really happened; for years the cutlass hung in the office of the Superintendent of Life Saving Stations at Asbury Park.

SHIPS sailed past the island in a long white-winged parade, with as many as 200 recorded in the course of a day. Often, as noted, they came ashore with harrowing results, but not every shipwreck meant complete suffering.

In 1868, to prove the point, the *Imperatrice Elizabetha* broke up on the beach and her cargo floated in. Natives opened box after box—all contained prunes. Tradition says that prunes appeared on every menu for years, served in every conceivable way. Nor could the wreck of the *Francis* in 1897 be called wholly tragic. Its hold was filled with fine wines and liquors. If ever there was a Tight Little Island, Long Beach was it, for many many days.

To know Long Beach Island was to love her. The Manahawkin and Long Beach Transportation Co. built a railroad line across the bay to Ship Bottom and by the middle 1880s served the island north to Barnegat Light and south to Beach Haven. People came by train, but not until 1914 was beautiful Long Beach fully launched in resort society. That year the newly-completed automobile bridge coaxed tourists across the bay. Just a wee bit of the fresh young bloom began to disappear.

The island experienced a modest growth, neat but not gaudy, you might say. Actually most motorists of the 1920s passed by way of the Manahawkin turnoff; practically everyone who got his puncture-riddled tires down Rt. 4 as far as Manahawkin generally figured he might as well try to make it to Atlantic City. To the west—to Philadelphia—a decent road wasn't completed until 1936.

OLD BARNEY fell upon trying days in the onrush of civilization. Talk spread at the end of World War I

that Barnegat Light would be abandoned to the fates, a worn-out derelict on the scrap heap of time. Everyone knew a lightship anchored out in the sea lanes was coming, although it didn't arrive until 1927.

The U.S. Government said in 1920: "Let it fall over" (in bureaucratic innuendo, of course, but the natives got the point). The local people, mostly Scandinavian fishermen and their families, did an amazing thing—they raised their own taxes and they donated their own labor to construct a makeshift jetty to save their lighthouse in 1920.

Eventually, after state and Washington politicians finished kicking the matter back and forth to try to get some other government agency to pay for the project, the federal govern-

ment deeded the lighthouse to New Jersey in 1926. Eight years later local citizens again rallied to Old Barney's help, calling state-wide for abandoned automobiles to dump into the inlet to keep the waves away. Now, of course, Barnegat Light is a state park, still in constant need of protection but definitely not abandoned.

THE 1914 highway bridge brought some changes to the island but despite its ardent supporters, not many people in comparison with other resorts came to Long Beach, before World War II. That posed the paradox: supporters wanted people to know of Long Beach's merits, but they really didn't want too many to come to enjoy them.

Long Beach Island's boom really

started in 1950. By then so many devotees of the strip had extolled its merits so widely they suddenly woke up to realize others had arrived to share the land "Six (well, four) Miles at Sea." Row after row of cottages, most of them seemingly built from a single Cape Cod blueprint, filled in scores of blocks of once vacant sand between Beach Haven and Ship Bottom.

North of Ship Bottom the growth has been more controlled. Houses are widely spaced and somewhat more estate-like than they are on the southern half of the island. Over on the bay side land is being developed, some of it fronting on man-made lagoons. Long Beach Island is growing; those who believe in widespread expansion wholeheartedly believe the greatest days in Long Beach's economy are immediately ahead.

STRANGELY enough, in the face of unquestioned growth, Long Beach Island maintains an atmosphere of charm, of mystery, and of suspense linked to the sea. It's easy to believe that the next step on the beach may reveal a gold coin in the sand, or to believe that the next nor'easter may uncover the ribs of a long-forgotten wreck.

Here's the way it goes with that new causeway: combined with the Garden State Parkway, it may bring in enough newcomers to make Long Beach Island just another strip of sand jammed from bay to surf with houses and people. It may bring enough people to necessitate boardwalks and honky-tonks and night clubs and even a bridge across Barnegat Inlet to Island Beach to give the curious and the restless a chance to get away in a hurry to go someplace else.

Right now, though, if your craving is for excitement and glamour and the chance to spend your money so fast it won't pile up income taxes, don't go to Long Beach Island. You wouldn't like it.

Photo by Walter F. Pullinger Jr.



Old Harvey Cedars Hotel, home of religious gatherings for past several years.